

Schweinfurt turns out in force for marrow donation

SCHWEINFURT, Germany – One hundred and twenty members from the Schweinfurt community are life-savers – or are at least willing to be.

Representatives from the C.W. Bill Young Department of Defense Marrow Donor Program discovered that during a June 2 Morale, Welfare and Recreation Street Festival here. The program staff members anticipated some people requesting information on becoming bone marrow donors, but the turnout surpassed all expectations.

“Often, people don’t want to talk to me about donating until it affects them personally,” said Stefanie Robinson, European coordinator with the donor program.

Capt. Eric Fowler, U.S. Army Garrison Schweinfurt Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment commander, helped to organize the drive, which was sponsored by the HHD Family Readiness Group, the Red Cross and the Health Clinic. The Army Community Service Center also donated gift certificates for all registering donors as well.

“So many of us in the military community can no longer donate blood due to deployments or living situations. I was looking for something else we could do to help, and Cheryl Dean (Red Cross station manager) suggested bone marrow,” Fowler said.

Getting donors to register can be difficult, given the fact that donating has a reputation for being painful.

“But registration is painless, just a cheek swab,” Robinson quickly pointed out. Swabs are then sent to a Navy laboratory, where they are tissue-typed and entered into a nationwide database for donors. Matches are highly specific, and so difficult to come by that only by having a large pool of possibilities does anyone have a chance at finding a compatible donor.



Capt. Eric Fowler swabs his cheek as part of the bone marrow registration drive in Schweinfurt June 2.

Many of the donors here were parents with young children. Parents are not a close enough type match to be able to donate for their children, but they can help others. Recently, military children in the German communities of Wiesbaden and Stuttgart were diagnosed with leukemia.

“I look at my daughter, and she’s (healthy), but I think of all the others that aren’t. That’s why I do this,” Fowler said, watching his wife, Capt. Teresa Fowler, rock newborn Savannah.

To donate in Europe, volunteers must register as part of a drive. Therefore, Fowler and Robinson hope to hold another one in Schweinfurt in August.

To learn more marrow donation, or to locate drives around the world, log on to:

www.dodmarrow.com

**Story and photo by Kimberly Gearhart
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